"SHREK"

~ outline & notes ~

February 15, 1996

PROLOGUE

1. DIFFICULT BIRTH ~ Royal Mage's Song: *"IT'S IN THE STARS"*

Night. A mighty storm lashes a castle on a hill.

Inside a high stone chamber a woman is breathing hard while attended by dark-robed physicians. The room is draped with colorful narrative tapestries and in a corner, a small court chorale of young girls sings a madrigal. There are many candles set everywhere against great mirrors to reflect brighter light for the mumbling doctors.

The woman, the QUEEN, screams in pain. The young singers falter. "Keep singing." The KING orders. The singers continue with tears in their eyes. The KING leaves the room, no longer able to stand the sight of his royal wife's great suffering.

Outside the royal apartment, the KING is approached by one of the attending physicians, a senior advisor robed in the purple and scarlet apparel of a ROYAL MAGE. He is enormously fat.

"Well?" The king asks.
"A girl, sire." The counselor answers.
"And her mother?"
"In heaven, sire."

The king hangs his head in his hands and his crown falls to the stone flagging at the top of a broad stone stairway. The royal circlet clatters to the hall below where it slowly rings to a metallic stop beneath double rows of swaying thousand-candle chandeliers of timber and iron.

2. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN ~ Witch's Song: *"IT'S IN THE STARS" (Refrain)*

Outside the castle, the storm is a raging dangerous gale. Thunderous lightning dances across the rain-pounded landscape.

Some miles to the East, a WOODCUTTER's cottage sits alone at the edge of a dark wood. Chunks of thatch are pulled from its roof.

Inside, another birth is in process in another, much ruder room. The action is silhouetted in fire light and reflected in a single dusty mirror.

A MIDWIFE/WITCH works alone over the painful labor of a grimy, sweating peasant

woman. The WOODCUTTER's WIFE screams and the mirror cracks as she dies.

The WOODCUTTER stumbles outside into the storm amid his child's baby-boy cries of "*Shrek*! *Shrek*!"

(SUPER TITLE: "**SHREK**")

The WITCH swaddles the strange babe and carries it into the thunderous night storm, singing a mumbled cryptique to herself in a way that quiets the baby Shrek.

"Gold and digging, money and pigging - fruiting from the loin.
Rolling and guessing, nothing is pressing; 'ware the other side o' the coin."

The WOODCUTTER's body dangles by the neck from a rope revealed in a lightning flash, swinging in a dead-weight circle.

(NOTE: Morph-edit perspectives and faces between dual births rather than hard-edit.)

ACT I

3. WATER ~ Many Years Later

The domain of the KING lies at an outpouring of a powerful spring in a broad, rolling land of valleys and forests.

The spring is situated high in a mountain and the crystal clear waters cascade in spectacular fashion to form the beginning of a small but strongly flowing river. The river tumbles in foaming rapid grades past the castle before reaching the valley floor and the subject town clustered along both its banks. After passing the town, the river enters a dense dark forest in the hazy distance to the East.

4. "THE WORKS" ~ Worker's Song: *"MOVING A MOUNTAIN IS NOTHING"*

Just above the castle and very near it, a strange building of wood and stone exploits the last of the powerful falls. Mill-wheels of timber and iron creak in the strong flow of water and drive a system of sub-ordinate gears that power large levered buckets digging on the shaded side of the mountain. The size of the irregular 'bite' removed from the mountain by the slow moving, primitive mining apparatus, indicates this has been going on for many years.

Bucket-shaped piles of dirt and stones pass on stitched leather conveyors into the odd water-powered building to be incorporated into some unknown process within.

Inside "The Works", each conveyored dirt-pile is sprayed with water, blasted with steam and passed through a furnace. Giant bellows piped with brass and copper pressurize many of the

refinery functions.

Every sixth or seventh pile produces a small yellow nugget that is seized by a foreman, weighed in a hand-scale and recorded in a book. Most of the dirt-piles contain none of the yellow rock.

Each stage of the process reduces the size of a dirt-pile and produces waste in the form of a gloppy brown sludge that falls into a grated floor sluice where it is channeled to a covered chute in the wall.

5. THE ROYAL MAGE (See Bottom P. 5)

A thick oaken door with emblem of ROYAL MAGE.

The strange mechanical building above the castle is the domain of the Royal Mage. The building is referred to by townsfolk and hired help as "The Works" but by the Mage as his *Laboratorium*.

Inside "The Works" is the near deafening sound of crude, circular mechanical motion. Piston rhythms. High-pitched ringing accents that resemble the crown-settling noise. Office of Royal Mage.

The Royal Mage plots a coup against the throne and secretly designs plans to use the flying machine to deliver explosive payloads. A bomb is made by the Royal Fireworks Smith from copper kettles and wooden barrels. Apprentice Mage is oblivious of evil designs on his work.

6. THE PRINCESS ~ Song: *"MY LOVE IS A TOWER TO THE SKY"*

A tall central tower no more than sixteen years of age spires up from the midst of the castle covered in thick ivy.

A powerful knight guards the castle portcullis.

This is where long ago the KING hid away his daughter and his shame. Deep in his royal bosom he knows the Princess' appearance is *somehow* his fault. He visits often. His love is as strong as his guilt and the private moments with his daughter are genuine and touching.

The PRINCESS senses she is different in some peculiar way but is completely ignorant of mirrors and of what other girl's and women look like. All mirrors have been concealed in a secret corridor (rather than destroyed) because to destroy a mirror is bad luck.

"Am I beautiful?" She asks her royal parent.
"You are special."
"Am I much like mother?" She asks.
"Not in all things."
"But many things? Father?" She presses.

"Yes." He smiles with a tear. "Many things."

Pause.

"I am nearly a woman, father." She states a fact. Silence. "Shall I be married?"

"Only a great Prince would be worthy." The KING finally spoke. "And they are scarce in these days."

"How will I know him?" She presses.

"He will be different from all others."

"Special?"

"You mock me, but come, the town prepares for your birthday. What would you have this year?"

"A Prince."

"I must return to the court." The KING sighs. "Think on a ... practical gift."

After her father leaves her, the PRINCESS stands in the vine latticed shadows of the high parapet attended by birds whom she has befriended over the years of her royal confinement. They bring her news of far places. She gives to her favorite, a great raven, the silken handkerchief she has lately dried her lonely tears with and tells the avian messenger to:

"Take this to my great Prince."

The bird flies away with the silk token.

7. "ALTERED EARTH"

Outside "THE WORKS", the blobs of smelly, dark gloppy process-sludge are evacuated through covered chutes into a corroded copper troughs. The nasty, hissing waste *(NOTE: "Altered Earth" - alchemical term)* is directed by workers with copper paddles into lead-lined storage barrels. The barrels are carted to a dug-out hole in the ground near the river and dumped with hundreds of others. The impact of the new containers cracks the seals of the old containers and a black oily residue leaks into the water.

Downstream, the river splits into two lesser currents around an enormous vertical stone of peculiar shape. The peasant river community subsists along the stronger flow on fishing and grain farming. There are numerous docks and some small boat traffic.

8. THE CLOUDS GATHER

A summer storm can be heard and seen forming in the high misty range to the West.

Because of its size, shape and position, the great stone that splits the river has several tales and legends associated with it. Many of these are the subject of minstrel songs, puppet shows and troubadour events. Travelling performers would contain references in their repertories.

A ragged but joyful minstrel dances through the crowded town-circle playing a peculiar, lute-like

stringed instrument (a 'Lutar') that allows the simultaneous playing of complex harmonies with clever fingering. The song is the fairytale of "Shrek" and the singer is followed by a long squealing string of the town's children. The minstrel leads them to a small stage in the shade of the great leaning rock where a puppet performance is about to begin. A legendary 'coming' is foretold.

The skies darken and thunder rolls through the surrounding vale.

Town activities show preparation for a storm: boats secured, animals unharnessed and stabled, windows shuttered, children called in by their mothers (animal and human), etc.

The storm hits. No puppet show today.

Blah Blah Blah

Inside The Works. Plans for new extensions to The Works are being drafted by a young Apprentice Mage. The plans are staggering in their complexity.

While the new ink dries, the apprentice works on a personal project: a small, delicate model of a flying machine with wings of soldered brass and leather and with struts of polished hardwood.

The door bursts open and the Royal Mage storms in. He grabs up the still wet plans, smearing the finely ruled ink.

> "The work must begin tomorrow!" The Royal Mage informs brusquely.
> "Tomorrow!? But, you said ..."
> "Hush! And where are my fresh *Amanita Muscarias*?"
> "I was going out after the rain. That's the best t..."
> "Now!"

The model is ridiculed as a hopelessly romantic waste of time.

The young Apprentice Mage is left alone. A water clock on the wall is geared to the central building drive-shaft and foretells many things. It is orbital in arrangement and includes the known planets in a design of ever-moving relationships. Use 'Eonotron' circular movement to roll into song while Apprentice Mage uncovers and spends time with his marvelously unfinished dream project: a full-size flying machine whose wooden ribbed structures mimic those of birds. *(NOTE: reference the Gossamer Condor and Gossamer Albatross work of MacCready.)* Song: "All I Want To Do Is Fly."

Apprentice decides his boss is right, that his work is a waste of time. He holds his beautiful little

model in silent contemplation and then hurls it from the high window, turning his back on the imagined plummet and walking away.

Shrek: Morning Star
Witch: Moon
King: Evening Star
Apprentice Mage: Sun (?)
Princess:

The main forest is enormous and endless.

A forest road some miles away. A huge person dressed in a peasant tunic walks with a staff that is a small tree and with a cowl hooding his features. An old woman hangs on his arm. She is speaking.

"The world be hard and roads be long and ye shall have a place in song.
More than most, as ye shall see, choose, young Shrek, the way ye'd be."

Witch vanishes.

The strange person throws back his hood to survey the road that stretches endlessly in both directions from where he has come upon it from the forest road. It is a youthfully vigorous Shrek. ANIMALS RECOIL

A strange buzzing sound in the air gets his attention and he observes the approach of the APPRENTICE'S MODEL and an angry flock of attacking birds.

HE PASSES A NARROW & A NET DROPS ON HIM! "GOT 'IM!" SOMEONE CRIES

Shrek rousts some ruffians who try to catch him with nets for a rogue circus by swinging a live cow by the horns at them.

Raven with handkerchief observes various unworthy young men and flies on with his silk token, looking, looking.

Shrek's peasant lunch encounter.

Shrek hears the song of an older, road minstrel This minstrel is a Greek Chorus of one who will occasionally break frame to lyricize prophesied events. Only the mid-wife/Witch seems able to actually relate to him in either presence or conversation by way of rhymes. (?) There is a catchy refrain Shrek will hum and whistle at different times for different reasons in the future.

Shrek learns through travel and conflict that there is a strategic advantage in witholding knowledge about himself. He learns to "Pull out only what I need to win." No one is ever quite sure of his full range of capabilities ... including Shrek himself. He still has doubts. Where and

SUN AND MOON & STANDING STONES ONE & TWO & SHE IS WITH IS RIGHT FOR YOU

WITCH?

NONE HAVE EYES THAT SEE SO LONG, TIME TO SHOW THEM WHO IS WRONG.

FIGHT OUT YOUR SONG

— SHREK'S FIRST CONFRONTATION REQUIRES FORCE TO SOLVE.

what is his place in the world? He would walk on and find out. — OVERDOES IT IN FUTURE

— CHASED BY MOB?

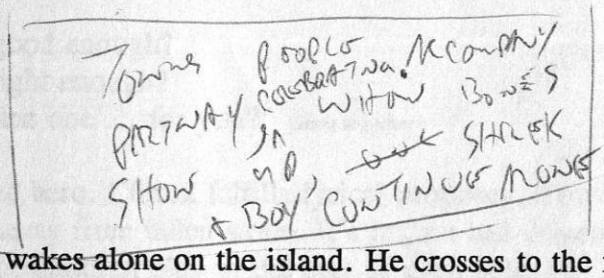
Another, much milder, thunder and lightning storm. Shrek loves these storms. Shrek eats lightning.

— SAVES TOWN?

— SACRIFICES CYCLES

Shrek stumbles in the gloom of falling night into a river (an act that coincides with his lack of any true goal or direction). He makes land where a hooded old woman is brewing some soup with chunks in it. Shrek partakes and falls into deep, significant sleep.

Shrek's nightmare.



End Act II

ACT III

In the morning, Shrek wakes alone on the island. He crosses to the far side and crosses to the far side of the river. He continues his now Northeasterly journey along the ever curving road.

Dragon? Lost? Friendly parting of ways? Told to stay behind temporarily?

Princess' raven is caught in a snare. Shrek frees it. It gives him the silk handkerchief. Shrek sniffs the token and the smell of the Princess' tears bring tears to his own eyes.

"Another is as lonely as I." He knows.

Shrek encounters group of young children playing a stickball type of game. They are unafraid and Shrek plays in their game. He learns of proximity to town, the fact of a holiday, "It's the Princess' birthday." they tell him.

Shrek completes his circular journey and returns to his point of origin (more-or-less) with broader perspective gained on his travels. He has seen how events in valley affect the larger world.

Shrek approaches town where populace is gathered in central circle in shade of great rock to enjoy a ragged theatrical presentation of the legendary 'coming'. Many children are crowded up in front to be near the fun.

Increased activity in The Works have loosened and destabilized the great rock and it slowly begins to fall. Shadows move across roofs unnoticed.

From afar, Shrek *does* notice. He begins to run.

> Shrek raises his arms high and catches the great falling stone over his head by its edge before it hits in a manner that coincides with events in the staged drama. His actions, like

NOTE: THIS CAN BE VERY CONVINCING. WITH SOFT IMAGE & THE MACHINES TO HELP US (BOTH OF

TITAN, SKG & SGI) THE ROCK CAN FALL ~~IN SHAPE~~ A WAY THAT IT HAS LESS 'IMPACT' THAN 'WEIGHT' (REVERSE OF A CERTAIN PHYSICAL QUALITY THAT READERS HAS ACT BELIEVABLE.) & STATURE AND SHREK CAN BE DESIGNED

those in the puppet play, save the children who remain unaware of danger until it is over.

Shrek's duet with distant Princess. He has realized through continual achievement and passage that his is an awesome responsibility. Song: "Am I Worthy?"

"Am I good enough?
Am I strong enough?
Am I big enough … for this?"

"Am I good enough?
Am I right enough?
Am I the one … for you?" *(Sung together)*

Shrek proclaimed hero. Climax fulfills lyrical prophecy. Timber is shored around Shrek so he may step away from fallen stone. It's impact had driven him into the hard ground to his knees. The children play in the pair of deep holes left, trying to match their tiny feet with Shrek's great footprints.

Senior Mage had been using his technical craft to position himself to fulfill the prophesies but Shrek's true fulfillment un-does all plans. These events enrage the senior Mage who gives a signal to the king's army, most of whom are now secretly in the senior Mage's personal employ.

Ground war between big, dumb, armed & armored forces of State against tool-armed peasants. Some knights change sides to fight with their peasant families. There are far more peasants than soldiers and the peasants are fighting for homes and personal liberty while the knights fight for mere wages.

Senior Mage steals apprentice Mage's flying craft and arms it with an explosive device made with the refined products of the mining operation. The apprentice Mage sees too late how his clever work for Art and Beauty have been perverted by the Greed and Ambition of greater powers. He agrees to outfit the machine so that he can better sabotage his precious craft.

Aerial battle begins. Shrek left alone for a momentarily greater spectacle.

The raven who gave him the handkerchief flaps around his head and leads him away.

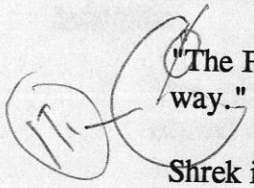
Song: "THIRD TIME'S A CHARM"

Shrek finds Princess in fulfillment of the Witch's last prophecy. Knight guarding path is extremely skilled and undaunted by either Shrek's arrival or appearance. Shrek's mighty staff is severed at both ends by sword and he falls to the knight's skill twice. Finally, Shrek calls on his own experience and new-found confidence and pounds the ground with

a fist. The resulting tremor knocks knight and horse to ground.

Shrek's local tremor also slightly trembles the Princess' castle. She is alone and turns to look from her parapet towards the distant edge of the wood. "Father?" She wonders.

The king's own careless, thoughtless actions were the reason for Shrek's creation as the tool to the sovereign's own doom (as foretold by Midwife/Witch):



"The First is the Last and the Last pass away and the rest of the world will be better that way."

Shrek is a reflection as well as an embodiment of the ugliness brought into the world by the king's ambitions.

Shrek's tremor has loosened stonework and the secret corridor of hidden mirrors is shown to him by the raven he earlier freed.

Shrek defeats his last inner fears in this Corridor of Inner Reflection. The mirrors, at first seeming to be an army of ogres, shatter at his great laugh and he is alone to traverse the broken glittering shards.

Shrek and Princess meet for first time.

Bested fairly by Shrek, the great knight of the king's wood swears allegiance to his new Prince and Lord.

Aerial fight between dragon and flying machine approaching climax. Fatal, entangling final collision. Machine and dragon and bomb tumble towards The Works.

Apprentice Mage jumps clear in mid-air of the falling wreckage and has a touching eye-to-eye farewell with his friend the dragon.

Apprentice Mage employs a hidden parachute and floats in a shallow arc over the flaming destruction of his former place of employment.

Mountain so weakened by years of tunneling it collapses under the explosive crash of dragon and plane. Chemicals stored in building create intense, sustained heat. The spring water continues to flow and is purified by the yin/yang inferno until it runs clear again.

Royal Fireworks Smith furiously sketches and makes notes while studying the pyrotechnic display.

Passage of "Last Dragon" complements/underscores advent of the new race Shrek and the Princess represent.

King is relieved of burden of guilt when he faces his inner demons as they are incarnated in Shrek. Public acknowledgement of his daughter as royal successor to the throne and her betrothal to "Prince Shrek" fulfills all prophecies. King hasn't lost his daughter or his family line after all.

End Act III

Subtexts:

The mining processes involve chemicals that have polluted the local water supply and caused birth defects, some of them quite monstrous. Some of the offspring find homes with migrant carnivals, some die, some disappear and some are drowned in the river. Later it is revealed that some of the birth freaks have even found love and employment with the alchemical explorer reluctantly in charge of "The Works". The occurrences are relatively rare and connected by the superstitious populace with imagined bad behavior of the parents rather than associated with the actions of the king's mill.

Notes:

Circular motion exists in Nature and in Technology - use for transitions (both visual and audio).

Shrek's movement through both the landscape and the story is like an object's movement through water. His encounters cause ever spreading eddies of consequence.

Song rhythms diverge with advent of industrial transformation. Piston rhythms. Smithy rhythms.

During the construction of this outline it became apparent how many opportunities there were to insert songs and verse to facilitate the story-telling. While we are not necessarily advocating a "Broadway Musical" approach (though this remains an option), there are many ways to incorporate period music through use of balladeers, minstrels, troubadours, puppet performers, children's street-game rhymes, etc. Such uses could reinforce and support various story elements.

Themes

Reflection: Water. Mirrors. Mirrors, being man-made, break. Water, being natural, does not. (NOTE: Reference Jung' preface to Bollingen's **I Ching** on significane of water and spirit.)

Passage: Passage of outer barriers reflects passage of inner barriers.

Conservation: Unless preserved, 'Things' pass out of the world never to return.

(NOTE: quote from Baba Diom, Kenyan conservationist ~ "In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

Exploitation: Abuse of Science by State. Technology is a lure and many are caught and corrupted by it.

Generation: Old & Young. The passing of torches/traditions to new generations. When the torch goes out, it stays out. Something that isn't passed on to further useful life is 'wasted'. The extinguishing of the dragon character is a metaphor of this.

Cycles: Circular motion. "What comes around, goes around".

Tradition: Importance of oral tradition and fairytales

Perseverance: Soaring above circumstance. If at first you don't succeed. Third time's a charm. Etc.